

## Images of Fossil Fields Expedition Preserved in Copyright Deposits

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On July 19, 1899, an extraordinary collection of 86 geologists, paleontologists, and museum experts departed Laramie, Wyoming, for 39 days of field exploration. Many of these men had never slept outside or in a tent, let alone in a camp setting. All were invited by the Union Pacific Railroad to participate in an expedition to explore the fossil fields of Wyoming. The invitation included free round-trip transportation from Chicago to Laramie. The assembled group represented almost every state and several foreign countries, said expedition organizer Professor Wilbur C. Knight of the University of Wyoming in a report in *National Geographic* in December 1900.

The group organized itself by electing officers and assigning every man to a “mess,” a group of ten participants supplied by three wagons, one of which conveyed the tents and other apparatus. Each mess was assigned teamsters and a cook. Another party totaling 16 joined the main expedition so that, all together, 102 scientists participated.

The finds were spectacular and numerous. By the fifth day, two tons of fossils had been collected, although the objective of the expedition, the Cañon of the Platte, had not yet been reached. When it was, on July 29, as recorded by Wright, “men were returning to camp from every



direction loaded down with bones; others were seeking teams to haul their heavier loads to camp, and though they worked diligently, it was nearly 10 o'clock before the last load of fossils was brought in. The next day's work unearthed a still larger quantity, the entire shipment from this point amounting to several tons.”

The field experience undoubtedly enhanced the professional lives of these men, who brought new insights and enthusiasm to their institutions and to their future students. Certainly museum collections grew. By way of the copyright deposit, the expedition reaches into our time to enrich our knowledge today as we view the events recorded by the deposit photographs preserved by the Copyright Office.

The 2008 Junior Fellows, Tara Neely and Kandice Newren discovered the series of expedition photos registered in 1899 by the Union Pacific Railroad Co. of Omaha, Nebraska. ©

*Above, Wilbur Wright sits in the middle row, second from the right, together with the expedition's elected officers. Below left, dinosaur bones are exposed in a quarry. Below right, the expedition cooks pose for a photo.*

